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ABSTRACT

The Ohio Consortium for Portfolio Development was established in 1988 as an interinstitutional research effort to integrate portfolio development into teacher education. A subphase focused on portfolio use by entry year teachers in a metropolitan school system. Personnel at Wright State University, Central State University, and the University of Dayton agreed to employ some of the same elements in portfolio development, though the approaches differed among themselves to some degree. The paper examines each program's experience with portfolio development, noting limitations and strengths, and presents tentative findings as of January 1992. These findings indicate strong student support for portfolio development commencing with the initial education course. Evidence also suggests that portfolios help in developing classroom management skills, content pedagogy, command of subject matter, student-specific pedagogy, and professional responsibility. The results indicate a need for further research relative to administrative uses for staff recruitment, selection, and development. (SM)

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PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT IN TEACHER EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The Ohio Consortium for Portfolio Development was established in 1988 as an interinstitutional research effort to integrate portfolio development into teacher education. In addition, a sub-phase focused on portfolio use by entry year teachers in a metropolitan school system. The three founding institutions are located in southwestern Ohio: Central State University, the University of Dayton, and Wright State University. Preliminary findings indicate strong student support for portfolio development commencing with the initial education course. Evidence also suggests portfolios help in developing classroom management skills, content pedagogy, command of subject matter, student-specific pedagogy and professional responsibility. The results suggest a need for further research relative to administrative uses for staff recruitment, selection, and development.

PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT IN TEACHER EDUCATION AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

The Ohio Consortium for Portfolio Development (OCPD) was organized in response to an invitation by Lee Shulman, Director of Stanford University's Teacher Assessment Project (TAP). In 1987, three universities and one urban school system began collaborative efforts to examine the validity of alternative modes of teacher assessment especially regarding minority and/or nontraditional students. The participating universities present definite demographic diversity: Wright State, a young, metropolitan, largely commuter university, serves a sizeable population of Appalachian and handicapped students; Central State, a historically African-American university in a rural setting, serves both local students and those from the largest urban areas of the U.S.; and the University of Dayton, a well-established private institution, serves a proportionately smaller number of disadvantaged students.

PORTFOLIOS

If nothing else, the rhetoric of reform demands action if not achievement. Some, in accepting the demands for assessment and accountability as givens, search for new forms of documentation/evaluation. Competence must be documented even though it may not be defined; the form of progress must be demonstrated despite the elusiveness of its substance. Others recognize the gap between the practice of competence and the presentation of competence and search for a bridge. And still others believe that preservice teachers need to develop the skills and acquire the dispositions to analyze, synthesize, integrate, and critique values, beliefs, and practices related to teaching.

In the midst of this debate, the portfolio, a form of assessment used in a variety of professional programs (e.g. art, drama, commercial design, architecture) has caught the attention of state officials and educators. The term "portfolio" seems to have evolved from "a portable case for holding loose sheets of paper" (The American Heritage Dictionary), to a display case of selected contents, to a case for competence. However, "there remains an open question whether the portfolio idea has been tried and found wanting or has been wanted and found untried" (Bird, 1990, p. 241). Given the variety of processes, purposes, and functions

among professional portfolios, one danger in organizing the "loose sheets of paper" and prescribing the types of displays to be included in this portable case is that the products will be "messy, time-consuming to construct, cumbersome to store, and costly to evaluate" (Wolf, 1991, p. 136).

Nonetheless, the members of OCPD believe that portfolios offer enough potential potency that they sought an appropriate image for the teacher's portfolio. As a process mechanism used to think through the connectedness of ideas, portfolios are not intended for use in assessing low level computational or reading skills of students. Rather, in the ideal, they are efficacious in examining how students put together more complex, higher order ideas (Forrest, 1990). Models ranging from the unreflective scrapbook to the reflective "work in process" approach, and then from the "best work" display to the comprehensive mega-cumulative file were reviewed, revised, and reconstructed. In the end, the three member institutions decided to investigate models which seemed to cohere with the thematic distinctives of each institution.

CONSORTIUM MEMBERS

While personnel at all three universities agreed to employ some of the same elements, the form, structure, and content of their portfolios differ in several ways. Each of the three approaches used by the original OCPD university members has been assessed as to its limitations and strengths throughout the process, even though neither the University of Dayton nor Central State University has had any students complete the full program as yet. What follows are the descriptions of each program and tentative findings as of January 1992.

CENTRAL STATE UNIVERSITY MODEL

Central State University, a state-assisted undergraduate institution with a predominantly African-American enrollment of 2,890 students, is located about 15 miles from Dayton in a rural area near Wilberforce, Ohio. Beginning in the Fall Quarter of 1988, portfolio development was instituted as an experimental project in the entry level Educational Foundations course. Thirty-five students were initially enrolled and they produced the CSU's first set of portfolios.

In general, the Central State portfolios are more informal in structure. Five activities in the education course related to portfolio development and reflection about teaching:

1. Orientation to and discussions of the five categories (professional responsibility, command of subject matter, content specific pedagogy, classroom organization and management, and student specific pedagogy) combined with directions for planning and developing portfolios;
2. Textbook Analysis: five 'project task sheets' directed toward textbook studies and assigned activities in response to critical questions on teacher competence;
3. Small Discussion Groups: requiring reports on teacher competence topics;
4. Library Research: an assignment requiring students to be acquainted with journals in education and to examine and critique the five categories;
5. Portfolio Party: an informal relaxed event to promote a spirit of inquiry and community, to permit opportunity for sharing personal and professional goals, and to prompt interaction among the students and instructor.

While students' reactions to these activities were stimulating and thought provoking, they tended to suggest that many students were motivated by extrinsic rewards in the production of portfolios: "availability of a portfolio to present at an interview for a teaching position" is one viewpoint that was frequently reported. A summary view of the CSU portfolio experience includes the following:

- Limitations:
1. Only two faculty members have been involved in the study thus far.
 2. The study began with a small pilot group of students in their first year of college and first teacher education course:
 - A. Results ("product") for graduating seniors not available for four years.
 - B. No structured interim mentoring after the first experience.
 - C. No assurance that the pilot group will stay together as a cohort group throughout their program of study.

- Strengths:
1. A "Portfolio Party" mechanism was created to help students exchange ideas and was enthusiastically borrowed by the other two universities as a viable strategy.
 2. A type of closure will be achieved in the portfolio development process by the planned linking of the first year course (ED151) to the capstone course (ED 440) which will be taught by the same faculty member starting in 1991-92.

What remains as a research and curriculum thrust is a continued effort to improve the model and to make portfolio development a requirement for all students in teacher education. Upper division students in teacher education who were not afforded the portfolio experience continue to make inquiries about portfolio production. The Coordinator of the Special Education Program has instituted portfolio development as a project requirement in all courses.

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON MODEL

The University of Dayton is a private Catholic University enrolling approximately 10,000 undergraduate and graduate students. In 1988, the University instituted an experimental program integrating CORE, a special interdisciplinary general education program, with foundations of education courses. Twenty-three first-year Elementary Education students were enrolled in the experimental program. These students were asked to develop portfolios, not as a course requirement nor as an "end-product" but as another means of interplay between students and faculty.

Students were assigned an advisor/mentor who met with each student during the second and third years to review the content and organization of their portfolios and to assess their progress toward reaching the Teacher Education Department's theme of "Teacher as Reflective Decision Maker in a Pluralistic Democracy." The portfolios included a wide array of material that made sense for the students. Using a Constructionist approach, UD's portfolio process did not stress a formal document as much as a process of engaging in activities and constructing meanings based on students' own emerging understanding of the personal and professional dimension of teaching. Beginning teacher education students were told that portfolios are used to assess their progress toward becoming a reflective decision maker and as a vehicle for reflecting on the purposes and means of education. Furthermore, the students were told that their portfolios would be used as a text in the required capstone education course Philosophy of Education to explore the nature of knowledge and the interrelations that occur in the teaching and learning process. (Eighteen of the original twenty-three students are taking this course, Winter 1992).

Limitations: 1. The prime initial faculty participant moved into central administration at the start of the third year of the pilot group.

2. The pilot was initiated with only a small group of students, all of whom were in their first year of Teacher Education:
 - A. Results ("product") for graduating seniors are not available until the end of the fourth year of the project.
 - B. No structured interim mentoring after the first-year experience.
 - C. Students not together as a cohort group during the third year.

Strengths:

1. As of 1990-91, three additional faculty members are involved.
2. A central administrator (Associate Provost) is now knowledgeable and experienced about the portfolio project. (He is currently teaching the Philosophy of Education course for the initial group.)

Initially, students seemed most interested in the portfolio products as providing them an advantage in applying for a teaching position. However, the discussions between students and mentors about the portfolios have resulted in significant dialogues about the student's work and its relationship to the categories suggested for the organization of the portfolios. For example, one student had written a paper for an English course on metaphors used in Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Had a Dream" speech. She reflected that her paper could fit two categories: her command of subject matter and her awareness of the teacher's professional responsibility to various ethnic and minority groups. On the other hand, there were instances in which students failed to see relationships between the categories or between the categories and their present work and career plans.

Two other noteworthy results are that students not enrolled in the experimental program have heard about the project and have requested help in developing their own portfolios. Faculty not engaged in the program but who serve as mentors/advisors (including faculty in Arts and Sciences) have begun to inquire about the possibility of using portfolios.

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY MODEL

Wright State University is a state-supported institution with an enrollment of approximately 17,000 graduate and undergraduate students. The students range in age from 18 to 60 (with the majority being 20-29 years of age) and are predominantly European-American, middle class commuter students. The Wright State portfolio process is relatively formative in nature; the theme of their program is "Teacher as Problem Solver and Developing

Professional." Students are expected to aggregate a number of papers that reflect the requirements of the faculty and to produce a document that has a certain practical as well as intellectual appeal. The practical dimension focuses on using the portfolio as a tool for use in interviews with prospective employers to demonstrate what types of experiences they have had in their preservice preparation. Students are also expected to use the portfolio as a vehicle for self-assessment, specifically understanding their personal strengths and weakness. The rationale for the portfolio assignment provided for students suggests the technical focus as evidenced by the language of competence and accountability.

As a future educator you will be asked to demonstrate your talents and skills first, in searching for a teaching position, and then as a year-end evaluation once you have been hired. The portfolio has become a valuable tool for the interviewing of prospective teachers. Administrators have indicated positively that the evidence presented is an important factor in final employment decisions. Seasoned teachers believe a self-organized, year-end portfolio gives them a more professional portrait of their academic year as compared with an administrator's written evaluation based on one or two observations in their classroom. Likewise, feedback from pre-service students indicate overwhelming support for the portfolio. Finally, portfolios can document our own professional self-concept and self accountability (from Wright State University handout, p. 1).

Portfolio development began at Wright State in the fall of 1988 as a department-wide endeavor. The two areas in which it was formally introduced were:

1. Phase I-Foundations of Education: the introductory education course.
2. Phase III-Practicum: students complete student teaching and take their last education course, "The Teacher in School and Society". In this course the portfolio is employed as an assessment tool for the students.

The portfolio construction was assigned as a class requirement and received a point value of 10 to 30 percent of the total course grade. A mini-lecture introduced the project in each class and prepared written materials explained the procedure. Explanations on the handout were explicit (e.g., use of a three ringed binder, put your name on the cover, include reflective statements and organize the content around Shulman's five elements). Students were encouraged to include photos and tapes as well as work with assignments from other courses. Professors stressed the necessity for individual creativity. Portfolio questions and discussion occurred routinely throughout the two terms. The quality of portfolio products improved as samples became available and the university supervisors completed training in portfolio construction.

At the end of each quarter the portfolios received a "mentor review" with the evaluation

centering on general adherence to the prescribed criteria, especially the reflective statements. The mentors used the portfolios during the student/mentor conference held in the last 10 days of the term. The portfolio became an unanticipated asset for these conferences. Students used the portfolio as an analytical tool for their efforts and found the portfolio activity useful in connecting life experiences to undergraduate education.

An element which distinguished the WSU project involved Phase III, Student Teaching. Instructors began portfolio construction in the Fall of 1988. A seminar by the Phase III coordinator introduced the portfolio project, stressing the advantage of having a portfolio available for the job interview process. Photos and tapes, sample lesson plans, teaching units, student teaching feedback reports, critical incident resolution and other teaching evidence were suggested for inclusion. Students received no formal feedback on their portfolios.

For the 1989-90 year the WSU Teacher Education Department officially included portfolio development in all three phases of the teacher education program. Phase II (the methodological phase) started initial inclusion the previous year, with full involvement in 1989-90. Phases I and III refined the portfolio procedures followed in the start-up year. At this writing early in 1992, the following summary outlines Wright State's portfolio project:

- Limitations:
1. Inconsistent emphasis on the process of portfolio development among the introductory foundations faculty (Phase I).
 2. Many Phase II (Methods, classroom management, etc.) courses did not correlate the portfolio process of reflection and development to course content on a consistent basis.
- Strengths:
1. The number of faculty members in all three Phases who have been involved.
 2. Over 700 students have completed a portfolio to date, although only about half of them have worked on the process throughout their teacher education program. Most of the others did not start their portfolio development process until late in Phase II and some did not start until Phase III. This has provided an opportunity to initiate studies of the use/non-use of the actual documents during the job-search process and the perceptions of these alumni regarding both the process and the product.

An added dimension to the portfolio project involved the Educational Administration area in 1991. The Department of Educational Leadership has committed three faculty members to assist in developing a process for the use of portfolios for selection and retention of entry year

teachers. Potentially , the portfolio process can assist administrators with staff selection and development.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ohio Consortium for Portfolio Development is in its fourth year of collaboration in developing reflective practitioners through the use of portfolios. During this time members have met monthly for planning, the sharing of individual activities, and evaluation. They have participated in meetings of the national consortium initiated as part of the Teacher Assessment Project to consider the special assessment needs of America's minority teachers--whether they be native teachers from Alaska, Hispanics, African-Americans or other cultural groups. Over 900 students, both graduate and undergraduate, have participated in the development of portfolios. Some of these students have graduated and are now beginning teachers in the entry year program in Dayton. Experienced teachers in this system have also constructed portfolios during this time. How do these participants evaluate their experience as portfolio constructors?

As the project began, everyone seemed to experience some confusion. The lack of models, uncertainty about the process, and questions about the product concerned the students. Standards evolved as portfolios were assessed by members of OCPD. Within a year, however, students began expressing satisfaction at solving a complex and ambiguous project. Those who generally do not do well on paper-pencil tests felt they had an alternate way to present themselves in a positive light. Many "nontraditional" students evidenced higher levels of reflectivity than their more traditional classmates. Although the level of reflectivity in first-year students and sophomores was not always high, many appreciated the opportunity for reflection that the portfolio provided. Some were helped to recognize the contribution liberal arts courses make to their professional preparation.

Many students still view the portfolio as a competitive edge in the job search. Some personnel directors have been impressed with the portfolios, but it is clear that they will need help in learning how to deal with scores of portfolios if and when more job applicants submit them. As teacher educators, we need to listen to school administrators as they tell us what kinds of documentation they find most helpful. Sessions with the Dayton Area Superintendents Association revealed that central office administrators wanted a summary of the portfolio rather than the document itself. While the practicality of this is apparent, the danger of the potency of

the process being reduced to yet another empty "indicator" is real.

The three models described above are neither "pure" in design nor mutually exclusive. Instead they represent a general disposition of each institution in terms of broader expectations regarding what can or should occur in the portfolio development process. The portfolios are also beginning to develop a character that is reflective of broader institutional themes. This may be the most important aspect of the endeavor—the ability of the portfolios to help students develop schema consistent with institutional themes. The differences are a source of strength and demonstrate the multi-dimensional nature of portfolio development, which is not a prescriptive procedure but rather an intellectual process that is guided in part by an institution's theme, in part by the faculty's biases regarding outcomes, and in part by each student's own sense of intellectual pursuit.

Viewing portfolio development as an intellectual process could produce a penetrating and useful conversation about teaching. Such a conversation, by treating teaching as a humane endeavor with particular forms of expression evolving in and through situated accomplishments, might even become a means for educators to cooperative in attaining a high standard of practice (Bird, 1990).

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